

NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF KANSAS THEATRE

the marquee • Volume 13 no. 3

SPRING 1987

"CONVENTION OVERVIEW"

The final touches are being put on the 1987 AKT Convention, "Keeping Theatre Alive in Kansas." As the excitement mounts, it's nice to step back and take a look at what convention is all about. Oh yes, there are workshops and shows and afterglows. But there is something more--something intangible, almost spiritual. An energy is created when people with a love of theatre gather together to celebrate theatre and each other!

Celebration is an important part of this year's convention. We may be challenged by the economic hard times, but that will not dampen our enthusiasm and commitment to excellence in theatre, as will be amply proved by the eight community theatres involved in AACT/Fest.

Now is the time to work together to keep theatre alive in Kansas. It's also a time to celebrate ourselves and our efforts. So come to the celebration March 27-29!

The 1987 Convention actually begins Thursday evening, March 26, with some pre-convention activities. The AKT Board will meet from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. There will be informal division meetings from 9:00 to 10:00 p.m., followed by an Afterglow. (Actually you can get down to the business of the afterglow as early as 7:00 because there will be a hospitality suite open.) We expect quite a few people to come in Thursday evening.

Friday morning at 8:30 the College One Act Festival begins. These plays will be adjudicated by James Symons, Chair of Theatre at the University of Colorado, Denver; Kent Brown, Chair of the Drama

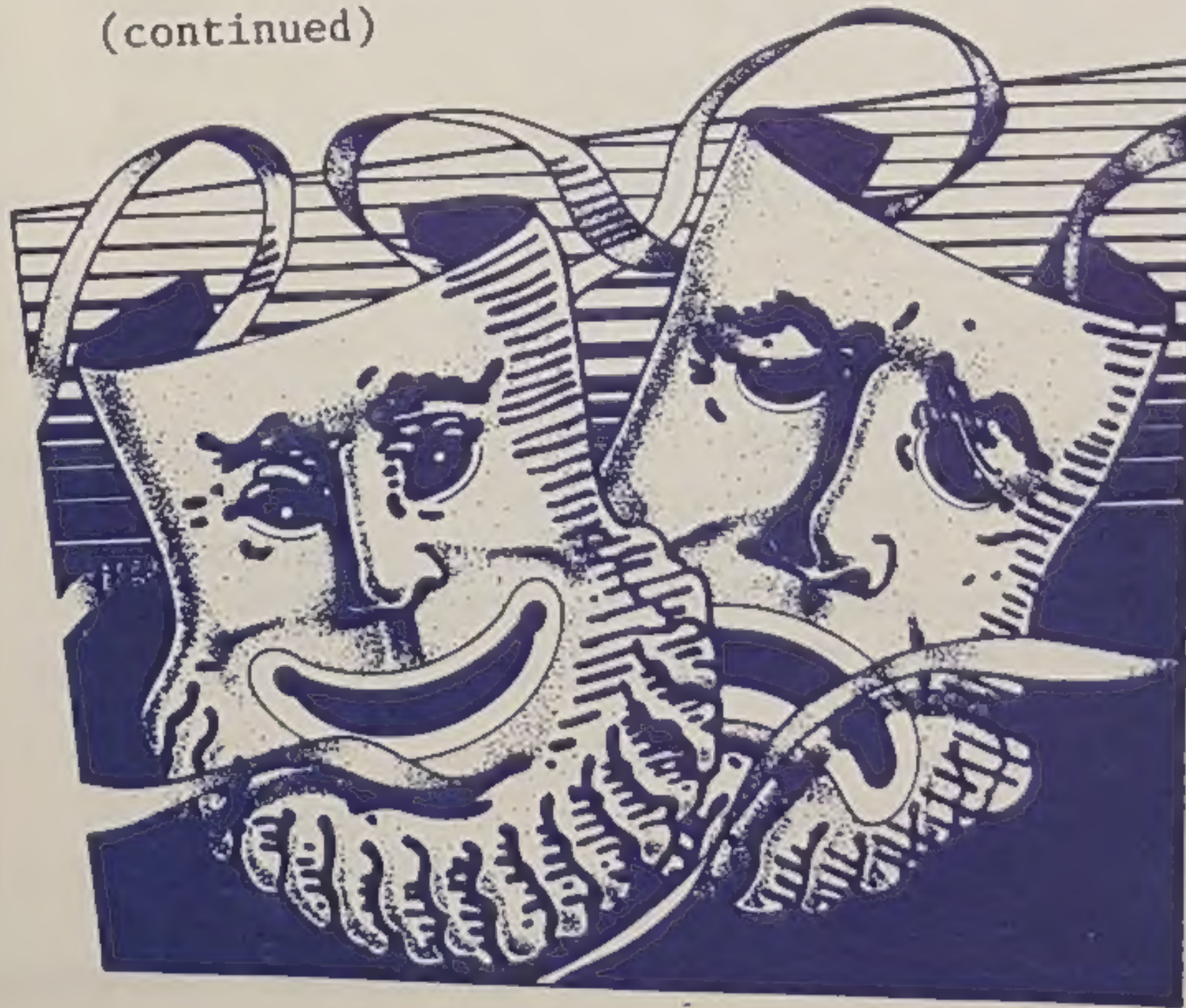
Department, University of Arkansas; and Joyce Cavarozzi, Professor of Theatre at Wichita State University. Six one-acts will be presented, and the festival will last until about 5:00 p.m.

Friday will also feature special workshops for the secondary teacher and the community theatre director or designer. A workshop on teaching acting will be conducted from 10:00 a.m. until noon. This workshop is geared to helping teachers, who may have only limited theatre experience themselves, teach others. Then from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Diana Mange from Johnson County Community College will deal with "Designing for impossible spaces on a budget." Certainly many of us in secondary, community and university theatre all into that category!

And while all of this is going on, AACT/Fest participants will be rehearsing.

Winfield leads off the AACT/Fest performances at 6:15 p.m. Friday with "The Last 10 Miles." Lawrence presents "Here's to You, Grandma" at 8:15, and the last play of the evening will be

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Olathe's "Lemonade." Meanwhile, an auditioning workshop will be conducted from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. The evening ends with an afterglow.

Saturday morning starts off bright and early with workshops. Lara Teeter, who recently choreographed the Broadway production of "Captain America," will lead a master's dance workshop at 8:00 a.m., followed by a beginner's class at 10:15. Also at 8:00 a.m. Jerry Crawford, Barrick Distinguished Scholar at the University of Nevada will conduct an exercise in vocal improvement called "Holographing the Play Text," and then he will do a workshop in role preparation, "Seven Steps to Heaven." Auditions begin at noon, and all the while AACT/Fest rehearsals continue.

After lunch, a special opportunity in arts education will take place at 1:30. Testimonies from several success stories this past year in theatre and the arts will be shared. John Stefano and myself will then make a mini-presentation of the Carol Fineberg advocacy workshop that was conducted for the Kansas Alliance for Arts Education on February 15. Division meetings will be held from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. THESE ARE IMPORTANT, so please attend.

The Saturday evening banquet will take place from 5:00-6:15. Outstanding educators and administrators will be recognized at the banquet. The banquet begins early in order to leave time for the full evening ahead. AACT/Fest continues at 6:30 with Abilene's "The Park," and then Wichita's "Philadelphia, Here I Come" and Russell's production of "Lemonade." An afterglow caps off an exciting day.

AACT/Fest continues at 9:00 Sunday morning with Emporia's performance of "A Woody Allen Evening," followed by the final festival play: Manhattan's "Lone Star." The 1987 Convention culminates with the annual awards luncheon (in this case taking the form of brunch).

Many fine people across the state of Kansas, and especially in Salina, have worked for a year to prepare this convention. Their dedication does not go unnoticed and I thank each and every on

of them...especially our new Executive Director, Louise Hanson. Walking into the middle of convention has been a whirlwind to say the least. But Louise has hung in there and accomplished the near impossible by putting in many long days that seem to run into each other. Thanks so much, Louise.

So this is convention...the activities. But what I cannot capture on paper is you. You and the excitement you bring with you. You are the lifeblood of AKT, the reason for its existence. I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at convention, bringing to life the real meaning of "Keeping Theatre Alive in Kansas."

--Teresa Stohs
Convention Chair



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1987 AKT CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

Friday - Sunday, March 27-29, 1987
Marymount College, Salina, Kansas

NAME (one person/form) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (home) (____) _____; (work) (____) _____

Theatre with which you are affiliated _____

AKT Division: Secondary School _____; Community (KCTC) _____;
Children's _____; Professional _____; College/University _____.

* * * * *

TYPE OF REGISTRANT _____ AMOUNT DUE

_____ Regular AKT Member \$55.00

_____ Discounted Registration (for AKT Sustainer, Angel, student,
and senior citizen members; spouses of AKT members; official . . . \$40.00
representatives of AKT member organizations*)

*Organization's name _____

The registration fee covers admission to all classes, workshops,
AACT/Fest shows, University/College Theatre Festival, Combined Auditions**,
Saturday Night Banquet, Sunday Awards Brunch and two Afterglows.

**If you wish to audition, return the Audition Registration Form found
elsewhere in this newsletter so we can schedule a time slot for you.

* * * * *

MEMBERSHIP

All convention registrants (except spouses of members and official
representatives of member organizations) must be members of AKT. If you are
not now a member, you may join or renew by marking the appropriate category of
membership below and sending the membership fee.

_____ Regular (\$15.00) _____ Student/Senior Citizen (\$8.00)
_____ Contributing (\$30.00) _____ Sustaining (\$60.00) _____ ANGEL (\$100.00)

* * * * *

FEES ENCLOSED

Convention registration: \$ _____ Membership fee (if applicable): \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Checks should be made out to AKT and mailed by the Convention registration
deadline: Friday, March 13, 1987.

Send registration form and payment to:
Louise Hanson, AKT Central Office, 1628 Dudley Court, Lawrence, KS 66044

CIRCUIT JUDGES RIDE AGAIN IN KANSAS!

AKT is fortunate to have an exceptional panel of visiting adjudicators for this year's AACT/Festival.

Jerry Crawford is Professor of Theatre Arts and Barrick Distinguished Scholar at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His plays have been performed Off-Broadway, on PBS, and in leading regional and university theatres here and in Scotland. He will lead acting workshops and serve as an AACT/Fest adjudicator.



Kent Brown will act as adjudicator for AACT/Fest. He chairs the Drama Department at the University of Arkansas. As director, his production of Brighton Beach Memoirs was co-winner of the Directors Choice award for best production at the Regional American College Theatre Festival. He has written award-winning documentary films and numerous plays.



Joyce Cavarozzi, Associate Professor of Theatre at Wichita State University, has acted in, designed costumes for, or directed well over 200 productions. She will soon be seen on national television in the CBS mini-series "Broken Commandments" (the famous murder case involving an Emporia clergyman). A past president of AKT, at convention, she will serve as an AACT/Fest adjudicator.



James Symons, Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Colorado, Denver, will serve as respondent for the University/College Theatre Festival.

Lara Teeter will conduct the dance workshops and act as respondent for the University/College Theatre Festival. He has performed on network television and in numerous Broadway shows, including The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas. His outstanding performance in the lead role in On Your Toes earned the 1983 Outer Critics Award and a Tony nomination.

STEVEN B. CATHEY

AKT is saddened by the loss of one of the staunchest supporters of the arts in Kansas. Steven B. Cathey, Topeka business and civic leader, died of cancer on January 4, 1987, at the age of 49.

Mr. Cathey was head of Southwestern Bell Telephone Company's public relations department for Kansas and was well known in the community for his active involvement in civic affairs. Until his illness, he had served as president of Topeka Civic Theatre and vice chairman of membership for the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce. He was the mastermind behind Southwestern Bell's Kansas Arts Excellence Program, which generously supports art activities (especially theatre) in the state.

Following brief duty in the U.S. Army, Mr. Cathey joined Southwestern Bell as an information assistant in 1960. He held a variety of public relations assignments in St. Louis, Houston and Dallas.

Mr. Cathey moved to Topeka from Dallas in 1981 as assistant vice president in charge of Southwestern Bell's Kansas public relations department. In that position he had overall responsibility for the company's community relations activities as well as advertising, employee information and other public relations responsibilities.

Mr. Cathey married Lois Parent on August 31, 1983. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter, and his mother and sister. Memorial contributions may be made to Topeka Civic Theatre, 534 1/2 No. Kansas, Topeka, KS 66608.



KANSAS COMMUNITY THEATRE

CONFERENCE

AACT/FEST '87

Salina is busy preparing for the AKT convention. Nine local arrangements committees have been meeting and working to be sure that things run smoothly and that there will be lots of goodies for you. The AACT/Fest workers are attending training so they'll know how to best assist your productions. We are all looking forward to the fun and inspiration.

YOUR ATTENDANCE IS WHAT MAKES THE CONVENTION! It's getting to talk to you and hearing how your theatre works and the impressive things you're doing that gets us all excited about this wonderful avocation we are so lucky to enjoy.

The AACT/Festival will be a rich experience. First, we will see eight plays performed by our peers. Second are the learning experiences stemming from the critical evaluations of the three adjudicators. And third are the absorbing conversations that will occur between plays in the lobby.

See you soon!

--Linda Lea Borden
K.C.T.C. President

SUMMER JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Emporia State University needs 1) a Scenic Designer (Assistant Professor level), 2) a Technical Director, and 3) a Lighting Designer/Master Electrician for its 33rd Annual Summer Theatre. Appointment term: May 26-July 25, 1987.

Contact: John Stefano, Theatre Director
Emporia State University
1200 Commercial
Emporia, KS 66801
(316) 343-1200, ext. 256



ABOUT THE AACT/FEST COMPETITION

This year marks the ninth biennial national festival of American community theatres, and the first AACT/Fest of the newly-formed American Association of Community Theatres. Of the eight contenders in the Kansas AACT/Fest competition at Salina, the winner will go on to perform at the Region 5 festival in South Dakota. It will be hosted by the Sioux Falls Community Playhouse on April 25-26.

For more information about the regional festival, contact Ron Ziegler, Sioux Falls Community Playhouse, Box 600, Sioux Falls, SD 57108. Their telephone number is (605) 336-7418.

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The winner of the regional competition will compete against winners from the other nine regions at the national AACT/Fest finals, to be held June 10-14 in Norman, Oklahoma.

The national festival of community theatres was begun by ACTA division of ATA in 1971. Certainly the high point in the national festival, so far as we in Kansas are concerned, was 1979. In that year the national winner was Topeka Civic Theatre, for its production of Neil Simon's "The Good Doctor." Needless to say, Kansas fully expects to repeat this accomplishment in 1987!

The William Inge Festival

The Independence Community College presents the Sixth Annual William Inge Festival April 4-7, 1987. The festival celebrates the life and works of William Inge, Pulitzer Prize winner, who was a native of Independence, Kansas. Mr. Inge's plays, records, books, and papers are housed in the college library and are known as the William Inge Collection.

Garson Kanin, Academy Award winning playwright, will be the guest of honor at this year's festivities. During a special program of tribute on April 6, Mr. Kanin will receive the "William Inge Award for Lifetime Achievement in American Theatre." Past recipients include Jerome Lawrence (1983), William Gibson (1984), Robert Anderson (1985), and John Patrick (1986).

Mr. Kanin is considered by most to be the premier critic's choice in the world of writing and directing for stage and screen. He has written or directed over sixty plays and films, including hits such as "Born Yesterday" and "Adam's Rib" (co-authored with his actress-wife Ruth Gordon). His work in television includes writing and directing the series "Mr. Broadway" for CBS in 1964. In 1945 Mr. Kanin was presented an academy award for best documentary for "The True Glory."

Also contributing her talents to the festival is award-winning actress Marian Seldes. Ms. Seldes has appeared in many

television shows and films, and she has won Tony Awards for her performances in "The Ginger Man" (1963) and "A Delicate Balance" (1967).

In addition to her salute to Garson Kanin, Marian Seldes will conduct an actors workshop at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 7 in the William Inge Theatre. The workshop is free and open to the public.

SOUTHWESTERN BELL AGAIN OFFERS GRANTS

The Southwestern Bell Telephone Foundation is again providing substantial financial support to Kansas theatre through its Arts Excellence Program of grants. Grants will underwrite community theatre productions and special theatre projects. Kansas theatres are encouraged to take advantage of this very exciting opportunity. A brochure describing the program and grant applications may be obtained from your local Southwestern Bell Telephone Community Relations Manager or by writing to: Kansas Arts Excellence Program, 220 E. 6th St., Room 505, Topeka, KS 66603.

UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE DIRECTORY CORRECTIONS

Sad to say, a few inadvertent errors crept into the University/College Division directory published in the last Marquee. Corrected information is given below, with our apologies.

INDEPENDENCE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Independence, KS 67301.
(316) 331-4100
*Jo Warford
Gary Mitchell

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
12345 College at Quivira
Overland Park, KS 66210
(913) 888-8500, exts. 3273, 3274
*Gerald E. Snider
Matt Campbell
Harry Langdon (Adjunct)
Diana Mange

Kansas State University Department of Speech and Drama faculty members include Alfred Sheffield and Melissa Riggs.

Susan L. Sutton is Chair of Cloud County Community College Theatre Department.

CONVENTION ACCOMMODATIONS



Days Inn of Salina has guaranteed a block of rooms at a special convention rate for March 27th through 29th. Prices for rooms are \$39.00 for a single or double and \$44.00 if three or four people occupy the room. Make your reservations now by calling the number listed below. If your plans change you must cancel by 6:00 pm, March 12, or you will be charged for the room.

It appears that at least two other conventions will be taking place in Salina at the same time as ours, so you would be well advised to make your reservations early.



Salina, Kansas, a growing community of 40,000 people, is the home of Marymount College of Kansas. The Salina community is served by bus and air carriers with frequent arrival and departure schedules to enhance transportation to and from the city. Interstate 70 intersects with Interstate 135 just north of the Salina city limits. I-70 connects to Kansas City and Denver; I-135 to Wichita, Oklahoma City, and Dallas.

With a commanding view of the city of Salina, the Marymount College campus is situated on 28 wooded acres in a quiet residential neighborhood which is only a 20-minute walk from the downtown business district. Salina offers excellent shopping opportunities in its malls and downtown stores, fine restaurants, and abundant recreational facilities.

In order to reach the Marymount campus from I-70, please exit on either 9th Street or Ohio Street to Iron Avenue east. From I-135, please exit on Crawford Street to Marymount Road north.

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(1-800-346-3026, x449)

AUDITIONS

Beginning at noon on the Saturday of Convention, theatres from Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Missouri will audition actors and technicians for the upcoming summer and fall seasons.

As of this printing the following theatres have indicated that they intend to be at auditions: Music Theatre of Wichita, Crown Uptown Dinner Theatre, Wichita Children's Theatre, Empire House Dinner Theatre, Theatre for Young America, Nebraska Theatre Caravan, Kechi Playhouse, Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma City, Firehouse Dinner Theatre, as well as Emporia State, Kansas State, and Wichita State university theatres.

Aspiring actors who plan to participate in auditions at convention may register for the entire convention (see the registration form elsewhere in this newsletter) or may register only for an audition, using the form below. If you are a student, you may select among the various other options on the form below.

Regardless of the option you choose, and whether you are a student or not, return the audition registration form below so that we can schedule your audition time.

AKT AUDITION AND STUDENT REGISTRATION FORM



Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone: () _____ (daytime); () _____ (evening)

Your university or college _____

☐ Audition (\$15) ☐ University/College Theatre Festival (\$10) ☐ Classes (\$10)

OR ☐ Special rate for everything above (\$25)

☐ Student membership in AKT (\$8). (Optional; students need not be AKT members to attend the above events.)

☐ nights at the "Y" at \$3 per night.

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Make check payable to AKT and send along with this form to AKT Central Office, 1628 Dudley Court, Lawrence, KS 66044. Deadline: March 13.

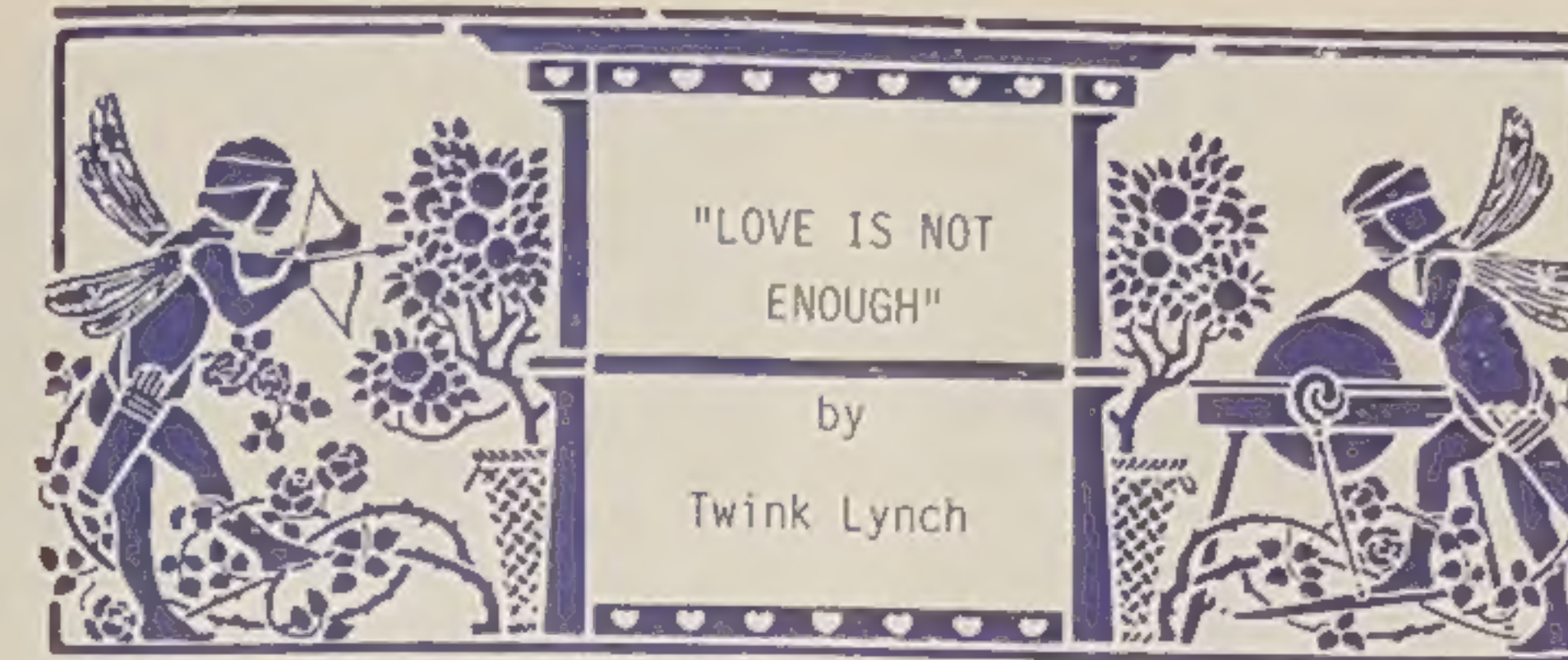
OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO STUDENTS! UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE THEATRE FESTIVAL

On Friday, March 27, there will be an all-day festival of student performances from university and college theatres around the state. The festival will take place at the Salina Community Theatre. Performances will be adjudicated by James Symons of the University of Colorado and the accomplished actor, singer and dancer, Lara Teeter.

A Friday evening class on auditioning will be led by John Holly of Music Theatre of Wichita and Lara Teeter. On Saturday morning Mr. Teeter will lead two classes on dance and movement, while Jerry Crawford of the University of Nevada will conduct two classes on acting. It will be possible to attend two of the four classes.

Special student rates for various combinations of activities are listed on the form below.

The \$3.00 per night at the Salina YWCA buys you a carpeted and well heated sleeping area, men's and women's showers, soap, and access to a small kitchen and drink machines. You must bring your own bed roll and towels.



[The following is the Keynote Address given by AKT's own Twink Lynch to the Texas Non-Profit Theatres Convention on March 15, 1986.]

It is just great to come back to Texas! Thank you for inviting me to join all of you in a superb weekend of celebrating theatre and learning not only how to "do" it better but also how to manage it better.

As you know, I was President of the American Community Theatre Association last year. It was--a "learning experience" of the first magnitude for me. At one point, when the "fit had hit the shan," someone asked me why anyone would want to be President of ACTA. I didn't have to think twice about my answer, in spite of all the conflict with ATA--I wanted to be ACTA President because I care so intensely that community theatres across this country become all they can be, that they build on past achievements and set new, challenging goals and objectives for the future--the intentional and systematic implementation of which moves them closer to fulfilling their organizational dream. I also want the people working in community theatre to be nurtured and supported in the development of their knowledge and skills as they continue to create and sustain theatre in their communities.

When I looked in my convention packet and saw the map of Texas community theatres, I was astounded at the number of theatres here! But, then I figured Texas is 3-4 times bigger than Kansas, so if we have about 60 community theatres in Kansas, it shouldn't be surprising that you have upwards of 300! That's a lot of community theatre!

I am aware that Texas has represented Region 6 in the National Festival of

American Community Theatre several times, and I have heard how difficult it is for your state festival adjudicators to choose among the winning quad productions one play to represent Texas in the Regional Festival.

The point is, there's really a lot of fine work being done all over Texas and all over the country as well, as those of you who have attended Regional and National festivals can attest. But what troubles me, in my own community, state and region, as well as nationwide, is the lack of substantial support provided to the talented production members by many community theatre organizations in terms of the management functions which are critical to the survival of the group--and therefore critical to the flourishing of theatre activity in all of our home communities.

In short, I want the same kind of commitment to excellence in the organization and management functions of community theatres that I find most often limited to production activities and performance.

Now I have to admit that I worked in my community theatre for almost ten years before I heard anyone mention the word "management" without choking on it. The word "effective" came into our vocabulary some time later. Then, when someone had the audacity to suggest that our members and actors and set builders, etc., were really volunteers and that we ought to face up to our responsibility for "effective volunteer management," we threw up our hands and demanded to know what effective volunteer management had to do with anything--after all, we weren't running a hospital, we were running a theatre!

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Three little words. Why did they cause such an uproar? Could it be it was because they didn't sound like "fun" anymore?

Well, my friends, I gotta tell you that crisis management isn't fun either. (Well, maybe after it's all over we get a lot of mileage out of war stories about the incredible board or membership meeting when the director resigned, or there wasn't enough money to pay the bills, or the fire marshall threatened to shut down the theatre because we hand't gotten around the installing the crash hardware--because no one knew whose job it was to do it!--et cetera, et cetera...)

But 5 1/2 hour board meetings aren't fun. Painting sets at 2 in the morning the night before opening isn't fun. Postponing the opening because we had to replace 13 members of the cast of "Guys and Dolls" during the 6-week rehearsal period isn't fun. It also isn't necessary.

What seems to be to be necessary is a commitment to take ourselves seriously enough to do what is required for our organizations to function smoothly, with a minimum of high drama, so that the people who participate in our productions and other volunteer jobs are supported and encouraged to develop their skills and are given appropriate and timely recognition for their contributions and achievements. We need to become people-growing places, not people-abusing places. We need to treat our volunteers so well they will keep coming back, and therefore our production quality will improve as our people keep getting better at what they already love to do.

So, how do we do that? I think we have to ask ourselves four basic questions every year. First, who are we? Second, what are we up to? Third, where are we going? Fourth, what difference does it all make anyway?

Who are we? That's easy enough. We are Topeka Civic Theatre, or The Permian Playhouse, or the Midland Community Theatre, or the Circle Arts Theatre. We have been called "amateur theatre," "tributary theatre," "civic theatre," "avocational theatre," "little theatre,"

"sandbox (?) theatre"--but for me, the best description is "communitytheatre." I have taken to writing it as one word because I believe we aren't what we are unless the two entities are inextricably bound together. We are "theatre" because that's what we do. We are "community" because that's where we do it, with whom we do it, and for whom we do it. If we ever lose sight of that bond, we violate the contract that is implicit when we seek financial support from our community through ticket sales, in-kind and cash contributions, loan of set pieces and props, and especially when we ask the people of our community to be the human resources for implementation of our productions and other activities.

When we establish ourselves in our towns and cities and villages and major metropolitan areas--I mean metroplexes (sorry, we don't have any of those in Kansas!), we usually say in our constitutions and/or articles of incorporation something to the effect tha our purpose is to bring quality live theatre to the community and to give the opportunity for citizens of the community to participate in our theatrical activities. I think we should add a couple of things to that purpose statement, one promising opportunities for our participants to build skills in all phases of production an management (in other words, to make our commitment to growth intentional and explicit), and the other stating our commitment to manage ourselves effectively enough to ensure a long and healthy life for the organization.

As a "communitytheatre," what are we up to? Well, of course, I know and you know we all "do" theatre--but we should know lots more than that about ourselves in order to make good decisions and future plans.

What kind of theatre do we do, for example? Do we offer a balanced season? Do we mix modern and yesteryear? Do we dare do Shakespeare or a Greek tragedy? Do we take risks with off-Broadway-type shows? Do we ever nurture playwrights and produce new scripts? Do we involve older and younger members of our community? Minorities? Special populations? Do we offer Readers' Theatre? Creative drama?

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How large is our audience? Do we sell out every night? If not, what percentage of our seats remain empty each night, and why? How long since we asked our season ticket holders and/or members to help us evaluate our production quality? Do we ever ask an adjudicator to see shows we're not entering in "FACT," just for the growth experience? Do we seek out and/or offer learning opportunities other than the on-the-job training of our mainstage productions?

Do we have enough volunteers? Are they having fun--really? Or are they feeling overwhelmed, abused, and burned out? Are we a closed shop--a clique? Or are we truly open to participation by all in the community willing to work on our behalf? Do our volunteers, including board members, have job descriptions so that everyone knows what they are saying "yes" to, and for which they can then be held accountable? Do we have a set of by-laws by which our actions are guided? A policies and procedures manual? A set of personnel policies, if that is appropriate? Do we even know where our records are? Are they still under somebody's bed? Do we hold an annual board

retreat for evaluation and future planning? Do we identify and nurture our potential leaders?

Do we have the facilities and equipment we need? if not, why not? is the Board too scared or uncommitted to go after the needed funds? Do we have an annual budget? Do we stick to it? Are we operating in the black? Do we provide orientation and training for our board members? Do we have appropriate insurance, including insurance on our volunteers? Do our board members understand their personal liability and fiduciary responsibilities? Are board members recruited in a year-long, thoughtful search for just the right people who will do the jobs we have identified as needing to be done--or is it a slam-bam-thank-you-ma'am process over a one-hour lunch?

If we could answer all these questions, we'd really know what we are up to. I am dismayed that many groups I have visited with don't even know they should be asking themselves any questions, much less which questions to ask. They live from day to day and year to year as if (continued)

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their lives will remain the same, perfectly satisfied with what they are doing, even if they don't really know what that is beyond producing 3 or 4 shows a year. God help them when the bottom drops out of the oil market!

The "what are we up to" exercise is called "evaluation." Without evaluation, we cannot do appropriate planning for the short and long range—which just happens to lead into the next subject of inquiry: where are we going?

I don't remember when I first heard about MBO (Management by Objectives), but it changed my life. MBO has to do with deliberately taking the time to set goals and objectives for our organizations and to develop specific implementation plans with timelines for completion of the various tasks to be done.

Most of us do no such planning. We ad hoc our way through each year, hoping we'll get the shows up and earn enough money to pay the bills. Some groups which own their own facilities don't realize they should include depreciation on their facilities in their annual budget. Some groups have spent their money so unwisely, or failed to cut their budgeted expenditures when season tickets sales are down, that they run out of money three months before the end of the current year and have to spend next year's season ticket income to pay this year's bills. That can go on only so long before the group is totally bankrupt—out of money and, worse, out of reputation in that community, so that the business people of the world are convinced once again that artistic people are flaky and irresponsible, and therefore not a good investment!

Jeanne Adams Wray, a former President of ACTA, used to say that community theatres have the unnerving propensity of multiplying like rabbits and dying off like fruitflies! I really don't think most of our organizations intend to die off—in fact, in many cases, I have to say I don't think dying off is necessarily the worst thing that can happen. I think struggling day after day, worrying whether enough people will try out so we'll get a good cast, worrying whether the set and costumes will be ready by opening night, worrying whether anyone will agree to serve on the Board

next year—or, worse, if we'll have a President!--worrying whether the high school will throw us out because some turkey actor smoked backstage, worrying whether we'll ever get enough volunteers—and someone who has a truck!--to haul the sets from someone's garage to the theatre, worrying whether we'll find a rehearsal hall, worrying whether we've got insurance to pay the medical bills for the actor (who was uninsured) who broke his arm when he fell off the platform during the performance of "Man of La Mancha"—and, if we don't have enough insurance, worrying about where the money will come from, and so on. That's what wears people down and burns them out. Much of that struggling can be eliminated if we plan ahead—know what we want to accomplish over the next five years or so and build a systematic plan to achieve it. If we want to find better directors so our shows will improve in quality, we should plan to do so, carry out the plan and evaluate the results. If we want to raise more money so our production budgets can be increased so we can have better costumes and sets, we can do so. If we really want our own facility, we can design a plan to locate the best available building and raise the money to buy and renovate it—or, in the planning process, we can possibly discover we simply don't yet have the reputation in the community to attract the money that is needed, so we can concentrate on improving the quality of our shows and enlarging our audience so when the time comes to buy that old movie house or train depot or school building or warehouse, we'll have the support we need. We will also learn how to do a capital fund drive, which is different from a season ticket campaign.

Planning ahead also enables us to anticipate some of the external realities which influence our group life whether we want them to or not. Downturns in the economy usually result in downturns in ticket sales. I understand that for every dollar the price of oil goes down, 28,000 people are laid off. That's got to have an impact on your ticket sales, not to mention on the people available to act in or work on your shows. The aging of the population is going to influence our play selection. The number of women working fulltime outside the home has had a dramatic influence on the type and availability of volunteers.

(continued)

The kinds of plays being produced on Broadway and off-Broadway are increasingly not ideally suited for many of our conservative communities. They appeal greatly to our actors quite often, but not to our Benefactors and Patrons. "Sweeney Todd" is not "Oklahoma!" A show like "Chorus Line" requires our volunteers to be actors, singers, and dancers—the so-called triple threat. Rock musicals offend the ears of our older, and often wealthier, patrons. How do we handle these issues? Do we do "Equus" in the nude? Do we use the big "F word" in "Same Time, Next Year"? Can we even produce "Championship Season" or "Lone Star" or "Beyond Therapy" or "Glengarry Glen Ross" or "Hurlyburly"?

Now I know theatre people are creative. They are dreamers, perhaps primarily "right-brained." I know most of us have math anxiety. But dreams don't come true by just dreaming. Planning, organizing, doing, and evaluating are what makes dreams come true. So if we theatre people haven't yet taken personal responsibility to become all we can be by developing our left brains along with our right, we need to plug the gaps in our organizations with people who have the skills we need to do those planning and evaluating tasks. It really is possible to find people who love theatre among the primarily left-brained accountants of the world. Or we can borrow executives from some of our local corporations to help us do financial planning. Our United Ways are staffed with people who know the community very well and they know where the money is and how to fund raise. We can borrow publicity from our local phone company—they are eager to build up credits in the community these days! Or we can get help setting up personnel policies from the personnel division of our local school district.

Theatre training does not typically provide the kinds of skills we need to run an effective organization. VLA--Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts--can help us with our by-laws (and I certainly hope you all have a set of by-laws which you review periodically to be sure you are functioning legally!). Volunteer Accountants for the Arts can do our audits (for free!). People who run organizations also need skills in running meetings, in problem-solving and decision-making in groups, and in con-

flict management. These are all learnable skills! And the skill theatre people need to learn the most, in my opinion, is how to really listen.

For those of you who work primarily in production, planning is critical to getting a quality show up on time. Evaluating your production, not only in terms of the critic's review and the financial results, but most especially in terms of the process, is absolutely crucial to future success. How do your actors feel about the rehearsal process? How do the techies feel about the work they did--were they thanked? Were they given appropriate training? Was superior accomplishment rewarded in some way? Did things get done on time? Were people treated fairly? Was their time well used? Did they learn something? Would they do it again? What suggestions do they have to improve things?

I feel certain of you must be thinking: "That lady is taking all the fun out! Whatever happened to creativity and spontaneity?" Well, I don't believe creativity is license to be irresponsible, or to take advantage of people to burn them out and expect them to come back for more. I see too much human debris left in the wake of community theatre activity. I think the best and most successful community theatres remember that theatre is a discipline, not just a recreation. The most successful community theatres have committed themselves to excellence in all their management functions so that the creative, yet disciplined, people participating in their productions are supported. People-growing doesn't usually occur in slap-dash, crisis-oriented groups. People-growing occurs when the group has developed a shared vision of what it wants to become, has developed the necessary plans to get there, has organized its work to predictably implement the plans, has recruited the right people for the right jobs, has provided training for its production and management volunteers and staff in order to build quality performance, and regularly evaluates its work to see how well it is achieving its program and people goals.

When I ask people why they participate in community theatre, they usually say "because I just love theatre." I'll bet every person in this room has said that at one time or another, I certainly

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have. But recently I have wondered what "loving theatre" really means. If it means feeling a rush of excitement just before curtain, or the thrill of the applause, or the warm and fuzzy feeling that comes from being with friends building a set or attending a performance or a board meeting, then love is not enough!

In my value system, love is an act of the will, not of the heart. It means commitment to doing what must be done so that that which is loved may flourish. In theatre, as in marriage and other close relationships, initial attraction is not enough to survive the financial problems and interpersonal conflicts that inevitably arise, unless a commitment has been made to do whatever it takes. And if you don't know how, you learn how. And if Plan A doesn't work, you use Plan B. If we who profess to "love" the theatre don't do this, who will? And if we don't, aren't we dooming our organizations to the fate of the fruitfly?

Which brings us to our last question: what difference does it all make, any-

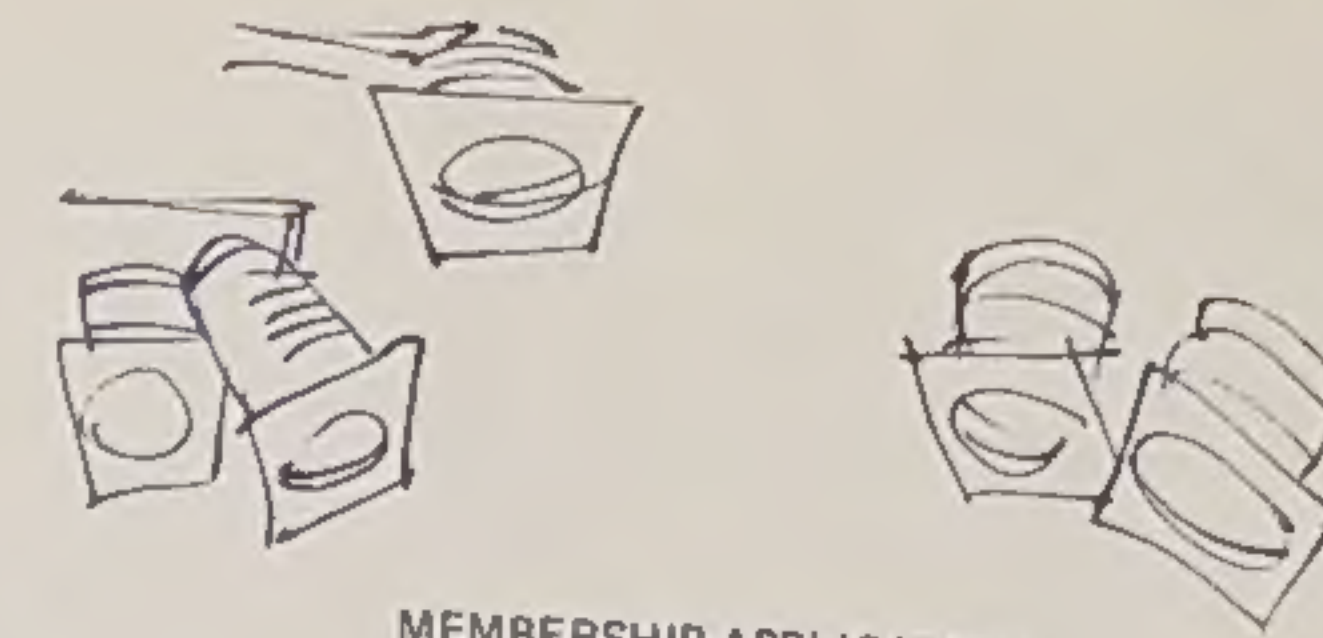
way? The difference is whether our theatres will survive or not. If we do community theatre for our own selfish reasons, tripping out on our own exhibitionist needs with no regard for the needs of our communities or our support volunteers, then it's probably just as well our theatres die with us. I don't consider such groups real "community-theatres" anyway. Theatre-in-the-community, perhaps, but not really of, or by, or for the community.

If, however, we are absolutely convinced of the need for live theatre in our communities and that the loss of our theatres would cause irreparable harm to the inner lives and spirits of the community citizens who participate in and attend our productions, then we must have some sense of the difference our hard work and commitment is making. Brooks Atkinson, critic emeritus of the New York Times, once wrote: "a community without a theatre is only half alive." I believe that. But I also believe that the quality of the human interactive processes of that theatre is as important as the quality of the productions. It matters that people are (continued)

nurtured and not abused. It matters that their skills and talents are developed and not stifled. It is critical that potential leaders are identified and developed so that our organizations may survive and thrive past our own personal involvement--because our lives sometimes change radically overnight. It matters that we commit to excellence and not to mediocrity, because theatre is an art form with intrinsic demands for excellence. It matters that we take the time here and now to evaluate and plan for the future so that our theatre may continue to provide the same kind of opportunities for personal enrichment and growth for the next generation of theatre doers and theatre goers in our communities. It matters that we try to develop a vision of what our potential truly is so we can plan to achieve it, instead of settling for the status quo.

Canadian educator Eduard Lindeman once said: "What people want is to count for something; they want their experience to be vivid and meaningful; they want their talents to be utilized; they want to know beauty and joy; and they want all of these things to be shared in communities of fellowship." That is the best description I have ever seen of the potential of the communitytheatre experience. I want that for me. And I want it for all of you. But more than that, I want it for our children and their children. I want us to make that possible by making a personal commitment to discover the untapped potential in ourselves, in our fellow volunteers, and in our organizations, and to strive to actualize that potential--starting today.

The journey to actualization begins with one crucial step: commitment. The payoff is the vivid and meaningful experience of creating communitytheatres dedicated to excellence in production and management, in, with, and for the communities we serve, and the beauty and joy of a job well done. Now that's what I call fun!



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